

Mister Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 4247, the Keeping All Students Safe Act.

I would like to thank Chairman Miller as well as the members and staff of the Education & Labor Committee for their leadership on this crucial piece of legislation.

Last year, Chairman Miller requested that the GAO investigate allegations of abuse in schools. The GAO report revealed many cases of abuse and harmful restraint and most of these cases involved children with disabilities. Additionally, the GAO report found that no federal agency or other entity collects comprehensive information on this practices that occur in our schools.

Without consistent data collection, it is impossible to calculate an accurate number of children, families and schools that have been affected by these harmful practices. Just one instance of harmful restraint of our children is one too many. Unfortunately, there have been hundreds of allegations and some children have even died.

Unlike federally funded institutions such as hospitals, schools have no federal laws that address minimum safety standards in schools. Instead, state laws and regulations vary tremendously which leave our children vulnerable. Indeed, New Jersey is one of nineteen states with no laws or regulations related to seclusion or restraint in schools. It is imperative that we protect our children and provide them with a safe place to grow and develop.

As a former teacher, I know that teachers and other school employees have the best interests of the children at heart. This legislation can address the problem of harmful restraint and ensure the safety of both children and school professionals.

This bill will provide grants for professional development training and also give states and local districts the flexibility to determine training needs. Our children deserve to learn in secure and protected learning environments and a federal solution to this problem is long overdue. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and yield the balance of my time.